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ABSTRACT

Cultural reciprocity refers to the dynamic and material exchange of knowledge, values, and perspectives between two or more individuals of different cultural (e.g., racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, religious) backgrounds. In this paper, cultural reciprocity is discussed as it pertains to professors of education and their students, based on the history of their interactions and diversity of experiences in cross-cultural settings. The ongoing study is personal and collaborative as a Japanese-Canadian female, and an Anglo-Saxon male engage in self-reflection with respect to their experiences in teaching Canadian College of Education students in a cross-cultural setting. After a substantial literature review, narratives taken from e-mail correspondence and personal notes are used to relate a specific example in which the female teacher used her own experience to discuss the nature of prejudice, racism, and ethnicity in an educational foundations class. Reflection on responses from the male teacher and a discussion on reconstruction of reality in light of the female teacher's experiences in teaching in the Indian Teacher Education Program illustrated the use of cultural reciprocity in her classes and its positive effect on her students and her own personal and professional development. (Contains 14 references.) (ND)

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Cultural Reciprocity: Exploring the Impacts of Cross-Cultural Instruction on Professorial Self-Reflection

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Cultural Reciprocity: Exploring the Impacts of Cross-Cultural Instruction on Professorial Self-Reflection

Cultural reciprocity, as proposed in this paper, refers to the dynamic and mutual exchange of knowledge, values, and perspectives between two or more individuals of different cultural (eg. racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, religious) backgrounds. Cultural reciprocity occurs when exchanged information (written, oral, visual, sensory) is intensively reflected upon by engaged participants--at least to the point where individuals begin to scrutinize the origin, development, and soundness of their existent morals, values, thoughts, and behavioral practices. An extension of autobiography, cultural reciprocity provides a medium through which individuals can critically examine and legitimize the nature of their personal realities. The presence of alternative cultural perspectives serves a dual purpose; to catalyze the process of self-analysis, and to provide vehicles for enhancing the abilities of and intensity with which individuals self-reflect.

In this paper, cultural reciprocity is discussed as it pertains to professors of education and their students, resultant from the history of their interactions and diversity of experiences in cross-cultural settings. The focus of this investigation is to explore the impacts that teaching in a cross-cultural setting has on professors' tendencies to engage in self-reflective practices.

Educational Significance of the Study

The examination of successful teachers' classroom practices in diverse classrooms has been identified as one of the "cutting edge" trends in multicultural teacher education (see Ladson-Billings, 1995). To this date, however, a significant step in this process has been quietly overlooked--examining the impact of professorial self-reflection on classroom practice in cross-cultural teacher education settings. It is

essential that professors teaching in cross-cultural settings examine the relationship between their individual biographies, historical events, and other constraints imposed on their personal and professional development through broader contexts, such as social class, race, religion and gender.

With respect to classroom teachers, this reflective and analytical process has been described by Butt, Raymond, and Townsend (1990) as one of "conscientization":

> In order to penetrate the way we habitually live, then, those experiences all have strong emotional character--shock of crisis or success, or the reality of a new classroom context that requires personal "adjustment." The events cause discrepancy and discontinuity for which we have few patterned thoughts or habitual actions, or for which we see the inadequacy of our existing ways. We are, then, required to respond as persons, required to enter a cycle of reflection and experiment to build new craft knowledge. We are required to act deliberately and think on these occasions. We are required to act deliberately and think on these occasions. This process, perhaps, is one of surfacing what was previously unconscious, challenging what was habitual--a process of conscientization. (p. 16)

While it is feasible that conscientization through self-reflection may occur in isolation, the meaningful act of sharing of similar and discrepant thoughts with colleagues appears to facilitate self-awareness of habitual and unconscious thoughts and behaviors (Butt, Raymond, and Townsend, 1990). Unfortunately, the professorate remains a largely individualistic profession, with few incentives and substantial rewards for cooperative and collaborative endeavors. The importance of professorial teaching performance for the purposes of tenure and promotion has remained of secondary importance when compared to productivity in the areas of research and scholarly writing. As a consequence, denial of or lack of awareness of teaching

mediocrity, incompetence, and unconventional or stereotypical beliefs is more likely to occur and persist in instances where open communication among colleagues and students is minimized.

The mental isolation and personal distance which some professors prefer to keep is counterproductive to personal and professional development. Indeed, professorial modelling of such behavior does little to support our insistence that interaction, communication skills, and reflective thinking are essential to both teaching and learning. In order to facilitate collaborative reflective development, professors must first develop an acute sensitivity of self. Understanding of self is proportional to the capacity for conceptualizing the complexity and multiplicity of intentions, motives, and power of influence held by participants engaged in the reflective process. In addition, the discriminatory ability required to sort, accept, and gauge the rationality and utility of evolved thoughts is perhaps best nurtured in an environment rich with a diversity of cultures, personal histories, and realms of experience. Engagement in reflective dialogue with students and colleagues of different cultural backgrounds than oneself requires an expenditure of particular emotional energy which some professors may prefer to avoid. Not only is fuel required to overcome primary communication obstacles such as prejudicial and/or stereotypical thoughts; dissonance resulting from self-recognition and self-disclosure of such biases may limit the extent to which meaningful conversations are exchanged and interpreted. The presence of such barriers, as well as time limitations and other constraining variables, may diminish the likelihood that reciprocal communications are initiated and cultivated by professors in settings of ethno-cultural diversity.

Professorial Responsibility for Self-Reflection

Lifelong learning is an educational goal which we expect our teacher graduates to practice and encourage in their own students. Yet, this is often promoted with

emphasis placed on subject matter content rather than that of self-knowledge. The advancement of cross-cultural education beyond the ineffective "accommodationist" stage within which critics suggest it presently resides (see McCarthy, 1990 and Olneck, 1990), requires professors to be self-aware, self-confident, and open to change.

Professors must be willing to risk and be able to articulate the nature and origin of their thoughts and uncertainties. As well, they must be able to successfully relinquish some of their position power, and be genuinely open to listening and considering the opposing views and alternative perspectives presented by others with different cultural experiences. On the difficult nature of autobiographical confession, Freud (1890) identifies a natural hesitation about revealing so many intimate facts and indiscretions about one's own mental life, and the associated problem that there can be no guarantee against the formation of misinterpretations by those made privy to such thoughts. Professors, for similar reasons, would rather that students and colleagues hold an ideal, mythical perception of their academic lives. By doing so, professors inhibit their ability to become self-actualized, and leads to a deterioration of well-being and feelings of disempowerment in both themselves and their students. Alternatively, cultural reciprocity, which relies heavily on the progressive process of engaged pedagogy, empowers by encouraging teachers and students to see the connections between life practices, habits of being, and roles of professors. Engaged pedagogy, explained so eloquently by Bell Hooks,

> . . . does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process. That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks. Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a

> manner that could be coercive. In my classrooms, I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share. When professors bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors take the risk first, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material. But most professors must practice being vulnerable in the classroom, being wholly present in mind, body, and spirit. (p. 21, 1994)

The search continues for a non-threatening way to produce expert teachers in cross-cultural settings. Following a comprehensive review of the literature on research, practice, and policy in multicultural education, Ladson-Billings (1995) concludes: "What remains to be researched is the practice of 'expert' teacher educators who are designing and implementing multicultural teacher education program models with little or no attention" (p. 755). There is a tendency for 'non-experts' to accept 'expert' practices (ie. teaching in a cross-cultural setting), as such knowledge does not exist as a body which is well-defined or understood. Additionally, the position of power vested within the professorate by virtue of variables such as prestige and authority (Abbott & Caracheo, 1988); charisma, expertise and politics (House, 1984); and reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power (French & Raven, 1968) may dissuade both students and colleagues from challenging the effectiveness and soundness of existent programs, curricula, and practice.

The practice of cultural reciprocity is one of the initial requisites to successful teaching in cross-cultural settings. It links collaborative autobiography and constructivist theory with cross-cultural education. Because constructivists do not

pretend to predict and control the 'real' world, constructivist thinking catalyzes dissolution of the guise of power which can prevent professors' own accession to the multiple realities of their teaching experiences. Constructivists believe that 'reality,' as a social construction, and 'knowledge,' as a human construction, can never be ultimately defined. Reciprocating ideas help to engage professors in assuming the constructivist mentality, encouraging them to perpetually construct and deconstruct the nature of their reality through a process of deliberate and conscious verbal exchange.

Constructivist and reciprocal thought processes are valuable to professors teaching and interacting with students of different cultural, religious, socio-political, and ethnic backgrounds. On the other hand, transmission of professorial knowledge and 'teacher stories' through a telling mode may be offensive to or unintentionally misinterpreted by students of different cultural backgrounds.

The Impact of Cross-Cultural Instruction on Professorial Self-Reflection

The potential impact of a dynamic and collaborative process such as cultural reciprocity on professorial self-reflection is greater than can be achieved by the individualistic methods of self-observation and self-reflection. Professors may be successful in enhancing the effectiveness of their self-observation skills through increased knowledge of supervision theory, and with the use of devices such as tape recording and videotape feedback. Doing so in isolation from external observation, however, fails to adequately address unsatisfactory teaching behaviors and methods which professors may either be be unconscious of or in denial of. As Aufenager (1985) writes, educators need to "bring to light the so far unsettled aspects of the very own biography which might have led to the attitudes criticized" (p. 3). To do so requires the use of an additional person capable of facilitating and/or pressuring the autobiographer to write about potentially important life events that the author had forgotten about or repressed "because of his or her defense mechanisms or the gaps

in his or her memories" (Aufenager, p. 7). Thus, face-to-face interaction or other verbal forms of collaborative communication (telephone) are preferable to written communication alone, as avoidance behaviors and denial are more difficult in first-hand encounters. Key to the process of maximizing the utility of professorial self-reflection and self-interpretation, is realizing that, as sole interpreters of their own biography, autobiographers may experience conflict in serving the simultaneous roles of author (narrator) and of protagonist. Both Aufenager (1985) and Howarth (1980) view the existence of this identity conflict as problematic in ensuring that the best form (closest to reality) of autobiography is constructed. The collaborative exchange of information which occurs in cultural reciprocity is useful in reminding professors of the dual origins of their shared stories.

In the process of cultural reciprocity, the reality of the professor is challenged through verbal exchange and nonverbal cues which then causes self-questioning. Further probing into the social realities of people from different experiential and/or cultural backgrounds may result in solidification of the original reality, or deconstruction and reconstruction of a new reality.

The Legitimacy of Narrative Authority

Biographies, autobiographies, portraits, profiles, case studies, memoirs, diaries, and journals have had a long history of usage in the arts and humanities as curricular mainstays (English, 1994). Yet, the legitimacy of narrative authority to inform research and practice has only begun to gain acceptance within the realm of "serious" educational research. The intended and actual outcomes associated with the use of such research is of primary importance when considering the extent to which the research findings will be relied upon.

Mishler (1990) parallels the "trustworthiness" of teacher narrative studies to construct validation in quantitative research. Validation is reformulated as the social

construction of knowledge in which the "key becomes whether the relevant community of scientists evaluates report findings as sufficiently trustworthy to rely on for their own work (p. 417). This includes consideration of the "trustworthiness" of observations reported, interpretations offered, and conclusions drawn. Essential to this is the assumption that narrative is a reconstruction of the past which is shaped by the context of its telling. Hence, an inherent problem of such research is understanding how individuals interpret events and experiences, rather than assessing whether their interpretations correspond or mirror the researchers' interpretive construct of "objective" reality.

A similar viewpoint of qualitative validity is expressed by Butt, Yamagishi, and Chow (1992) in their studies of collaborative autobiography; it is the congruence of autobiographical text with the lived reality of that person. Validity is how well the perceptions, feeling, thinking, experience of persons; also the breadth, depth, and interrelationships of issues, concerns, and themes presented.

In autobiographical research then, the opportunity for clarification of written text by the recipients of the author's "reality" can substantially enhance the depth of understanding. The vast amount of information which an author filters out in their autobiography is a result of having a) decided what constitutes relevant and irrelevant information, b) prioritizing the information to be presented, c) eliminating information which may be too "risky" to reveal, d) deciding which information would be self-enhancing, e) choosing to ignore the significance of sharing "unresolved issues" , and f) weighing the advantages of sharing personal historical information with unknown future events and encounters.

The validity of findings resulting from cultural reciprocity then, is capable of actually existing in theory alone. The politics of personal knowledge and narrative enter into the self-construction of reality as well as the construction of reality we create for others to view. Grumet (1987) suggests that every telling is a partial evasion of the truth, and

personal stories are in fact masks; therefore, the politic of narrative is a social struggle, as well an ontological one. The human mind can be shaped and manipulated by the stories we tell to ourselves and to others. For this reason, the true reality of an event is embodied in the ever-shifting intersections and unions created by the sets of personal realities of individuals involved directly or indirectly in the interpretation of a given event. The principal value of reciprocity is not to discover a culturally negotiated or ultimate reality. The purpose is to conscientiously practice engaged pedagogy to increase self-understanding of culturally embedded thoughts, and reciprocally to assist students in their quest for self-understanding within alternative cultural contexts.

Method and Data Source

This ongoing study is autobiographical and collaborative in nature; the subjects are the authors of this paper. The study of autobiography in multicultural education legitimizes the voices and experiences of diverse people, and provides an opportunity for the "critical examination and experience of difference" (Jackson, 1992, p. 4). Consistent with the definition of cultural reciprocity as stated previously, the authors have engaged in self-reflection with respect to their experiences in teaching Canadian College of Education students in a cross-cultural setting.

Wendy Lamont is a third generation Japanese-Canadian female who has been an Assistant Professor at the University of Saskatchewan for the past three years. She has an Ed.D. in the area of educational administration and has a joint appointment with the Department of Curriculum Studies in the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP).

Jonathan Black-Branch is an Anglo-Saxon male who has a Ph.D. in Educational Administration, and has also worked as an Assistant Professor at the University of Saskatchewan. He is currently a Junior Fellow (of Law) at the University of Oxford. Both authors have maintained very regular communication via letters, telephone, and

E-mail. The reciprocal communications and relationships explored in this study are those between the authors and their experiences with peoples from various ethnocultural backgrounds.

In the Beginning

We (Jonathan and Wendy) have known each other for three years, yet have established a relationship which is highly dependent on trust and the mutual search for self-understanding, self-development, and professional development. We share similar familial and educational experiences, despite the fact that we come from different cultural backgrounds.

As regularly as time would permit, we would take the opportunity to recount the events of our day. Both just beginning our careers in academe, we relished this time to debrief. This concerted effort to reorganize our thoughts, emotions, and conceptualizations of daily events (political, academic, social, collegial, personal) was therapeutic in a way which could be described as quazi-mentoring. We trusted each other so enthusiastically and confidently that we became mutually cognizant of the each others' verbal and nonverbal rapport behaviors. These included vigorous and at times more slow and thoughtful head nodding, glowing beams of enthusiasm, and adrenalin-induced cries of agreement (YES!!, I Know!, ME TOO!, Precisely!, etc.). We yearned to gain new perspectives into the daily realities we had already created, seeking ways to continually deconstruct and reconstruct them given added insights, knowledge, and information that we had previously been consciously unaware of.

A number of processes have contributed to our largely constructivist ways of thinking and behaving in the classroom and with each other; we will describe the evolution of this 'cultural reciprocity.' This mutually empowering process has been most significant to our personal as well as professional self-development. For illustrative purposes, we simplify the process considerably by exemplifying the

evolutionary nature of reciprocity through our shared interpretations. The narratives which follow represent only a small segment taken from our data bank of E-mail correspondences and personal notes.

Wendy's Story: "Go Home, Chinaman!"

In my Educational Foundations class, we were discussing the nature of prejudice, racism, and ethnicity. Of the fifty six students in this first-year class, all but one of the students is Aboriginal. After reading some of the more vivid descriptions of prejudice recounted by Gordon Allport in his book The Nature of Prejudice, I spontaneously decided to share something that had happened recently:

I was driving down the street with my window rolled down. On the median to the left of me was a Caucasian adolescent boy straddling his bicycle. As my car approached, the boy's face turned into an angry grimace. With a vicious smile, he screamed, "Go home, Chinaman!" Shock, numbness, and an impending sense of inferiority pervaded my soul. I contemplated following him home. I wanted him as well as his parents to feel shame and remorse for my pain. Resisting this, I returned home and began to reflect on my ambiguous feelings. What was the underlying source of my pain? Why couldn't I react in a more mature and self-controlled manner? As I recounted the story to my students, my eyes scanned the room. I felt a sweeping sense of community and comfort from the teary eyes, and nods of understanding. My eyes landed on a young student. He was grinning, and began to chuckle knowingly under his breath. Had it not been for the multitude of angry arrows shot immediately through him by his classmates glances, I felt his laughter would not have subsided.

Another student's voice broke the silence. She had a similar incident to share. Several other classmates also recounted their stories, and then we began to analyze ourselves individually and as a group. I began. " I think that one reason I was so hurt was because I am rarely aware of being singled out as a minority. I grew up with white

people, and had convinced myself that I had been assimilated. Not only did he think I was a minority, he called me a Chinaman, and I'm Japanese." Is this my ethnocentricity coming out? Did I really believe that Japanese people were better than Chinese people? We continued to share. To my surprise, the student who had laughed earlier raised his hand to speak. He said that as I told the story, he felt uncomfortable and nervous. He could see himself as that person on the bicycle. He had not realized that, as an Indian who detested racist attacks on himself, he was racist towards other ethnic groups.

I wondered how this incident would interfere with our teacher-student relationship; I wondered if I would display a negative bias against him in the future Where does personal, ethical and professional responsibility fit into this whole teacher education process? How much time and energy should professors expend on trying to alter what they believe to be "undesirable" prejudices? As the students left for the day, several women stayed to shake my hand. Later, an Aboriginal friend told me of the deep cultural significance held in the silent handshake. Those students had paid their deepest respect to me. I was not just their professor, I was an emotional human being with a spirit I was willing to share.

Since I began working in ITEP, I have experienced a new sense of self. I am beginning to understand the greeting "It's good to see a brown face again." The students smile at me, laugh with me--I feel more comfortable with being myself when I teach.

I think that my race/ethnicity/minority status--whatever you want to call it, does matter. In ITEP classes, I feel comfortable as well as a sense of duty in talking about my experiences with racism. We can share our stories of hurt and examine our feelings of futility, even though we come from different minority cultures. This sense of reciprocal giving and sharing with my students of a different cultural background than my own has very significantly informed and influenced my practice. The feedback and

insights I gain from my students encourage me to continue sharing these verbal reflections. This is a first-hand approach to teaching the technique of self-reflection.

Jonathan's Response:

I have a tendency to dissociate myself from people like that young man on the bike. I fear that people will classify me as being like them, particularly if they are Anglo males. The bias created diminishes my desire to try and change them.

Your experience reminds me of a similar incident where I saw a student dissociate herself with people from her group. She was black and so too were the other students involved in the incident. That is, I was accompanying a group of predominantly Black students to a play which portrayed the racism experienced by Blacks as they grew up in England. Following the performance, we engaged in a discussion of the overt racism of Whites against Blacks. After listening to this conversation for nearly an hour, one of the Black females spoke up. She quoted a Black man in the group who had made a derogatory comment against Muslims. Herself a Muslim, she felt she held a special "license to speak." In those critical moments after she spoke, the group realized that, while they were freely persecuting White people for racial prejudice, they themselves held ethnocentric prejudices against Muslims. Was the prejudism because of the difference in religious faith (Christian versus Muslim), or did physical appearance and behaviors influence their feelings? This "license" to speak works in interesting ways...

Wendy's Reply

I have only begun to experience this notion of "license to speak" as a reality in the political environment of the university. On two occasions now, I have been asked to sit on committees as "the" minority representative. Funny that this did not occur to me until I got to the meeting. People are reluctant to tell me the obvious so that I won't feel

they are categorizing me. I don't mind now if I do get asked for these reasons...never before have I experienced such voice or clout (?) by virtue of my ethnic background or appearance. Then again, only recently have I begun to realize that I don't physically blend in with the crowd the way I have always led myself to believe.

Wendy's Concluding Self-Discussion:

Reality is an exceedingly difficult construct to recreate in written form. As I now try to record my thoughts, I realize that my original perception of reality has been altered. Through the passage of time, the infiltration of memories, occurrence of new events, and the reception of new knowledge and insights by and about others, alters the way and detail with which I remember events. My recollection of the "Chinaman event" consists of the historical fact - what, in actuality took place; the social fact - as seen and encountered by others observing the event; the lived fact--as experienced and interpreted by me; and the re-interpreted fact - the reality of the event as interpreted by others analyzing my interpretation of the event. Embedded in my autobiographical reality - is the assumption that I have accurately interpreted and assimilated the "facts" as described above. My reconstruction of reality continues to change as new insights into myself and increased understanding of the past continues to be generated.

In the "Chinaman" incident which I relayed to my group of Native students, I felt that, even though there were considerable differences in our backgrounds, some type of ethnic bond existed which enabled and encouraged me to convey my story without apprehension. I was, in fact, relying on the mutual existence of this bond as an identity link. The subconscious value of this link must be considerable, as it influenced me to relate stories which I had not previously wanted to share with my classes of non-Native students. As I listened to the stories of my students, I was simultaneously thinking of how my situation related to theirs. Perhaps this was a way of trying to justify the existence of my anger and hurt, which I realized was probably trivial in contrast to the

amounts of racism experienced by them. How could I, then, be qualified to discuss racism with the depth and wisdom they likely sought?

Jonathan sometimes startles me with his responses, and I have to think deeply about what he says. Once, we were discussing the slang 'Jap,' and he said that in Eastern Canada (I've always lived in the West), 'JAP' is an acronym for Jewish American Princess--a positive connotation, apparently. I was uncertain about believing him. Could it be possible that if I thought of this connotation the next time I heard 'Jap,' I could feel differently? It's funny how often I think of 'JAP.' I used this as an example in my language class, when we were discussing the concepts of prejudicial language. They too, were puzzled at the connection of these two words which sounded the same, but are so incredibly different. We decided that the hurtful nature of the word was not in the actual word itself, but in our belief that the intent of the word is not positive. This arose from our discussion of how students in ITEP refer to each other as Indian, rather than Native, Aboriginal, or First Nations. They teach their children childhood songs such as "One Little, Two Little, Three Little Indians," yet feel greatly prejudiced against if non-Native people teach the song, or refer to them as 'Indians." Again, the issue of who holds the "license to speak" arises.

I remain puzzled about how one gains this licence, and when one actually gains knowedge of the appropriate times to use it. When I speak with my students, we use "Indian" frequently, and I know that we respect the pride associated with it. Yet, I cannot understand why I would be so hurt to be called a "Jap," even if my good friend Jonathan were to call me that in a kidding, playful way.

There is so much to think about, so much to learn about who I am. When I was younger, I remember being very self-conscious around minority people of any type, particularly large groups of 'them.' Believing that I was somehow "whiter" in my speech, appearance, and behavior, I allowed myself to perpetuate and increase my personal level of biased and stereotypical thought.

It has been through my extraordinary experience teaching in the Indian Teacher Education Program that I have finally been able to commence my own journey for cultural identity. Through the unconditional acceptance I feel as a member of the ITEP program, and as a result of practicing cultural reciprocity through engaged pedagogy, my mind has been liberated to explore paths of knowledge I was not before conscious of seeking. My increased ethno-cultural awareness and self-knowledge inspires me to resolutely explore the privileges that education enables--the freedom to think, the consent and liberation to be, and the desire to live each moment and teach each day with a receptive mind and open heart.

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